

Statement of Biosecurity Policies and Programs for Western Australia

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BACKGROUND

Compared to other world producers and traders of agricultural products, Western Australia has a considerable marketing advantage as the state is free of many pests and diseases that cause major production and market losses among its trading competitors. This is primarily a function of its geographical isolation and stringent quarantine policy. However significant increases in interstate and international trade and tourism has exposed the State's livestock industries to an increased level of risk of introduction of exotic pests and diseases.

LIVESTOCK BIOSECURITY

The Department of Agriculture either implements a number of policies and programs which are primarily aimed at reducing the risk of incursions of an Emergency Animal Disease and managing the incursion should one occur.

These include:

- An international quarantine barrier program managed by AQIS staff;
- An interstate quarantine barrier program managed by Department of Agriculture staff;
- A comprehensive animal disease surveillance program involving general and targeted surveillance;
- A coordinated disease diagnostic service through a field veterinary service and NATA accredited laboratories;
- A mandatory identification system for all livestock;
- Mandatory waybills for all livestock movements;
- A feral animal control program.

These specific biosecurity programs are underpinned by effective information management systems that enable recording and reporting of disease occurrences and livestock tracing.

To further reduce the risks of incursions of pests and diseases and other risks to livestock markets such as chemical residues and adverse animal welfare perceptions, the Department of Agriculture has introduced the **StockGuard** program. This program brings together all sectors of Western Australia's animal industries to develop strategies to minimise the risks.

StockGuard complements existing biosecurity initiatives of government and industry and provides a coordinated industry wide approach to identify issues and recommend solutions.

Biosecurity policies and programs focus on the following key strategies.

Threat identification and risk assessment

A primary task under StockGuard is to coordinate identification of threats to productivity, sustainability or marketability and assessment of the potential impact on local industry. StockGuard builds on work already done in the State, interstate and international programs in threat identification and risk assessment.

Barrier quarantine and disease control

The Department of Agriculture provides staff to carry out national quarantine restrictions under the direction of the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS), and also state quarantine requirements. Improved threat identification and communication assists AQIS and the Department of Agriculture to ensure that the entry, establishment and spread into Western Australia of exotic pests and diseases is minimised.

Western Australia has restrictions on movements of animals and animal products from other states of Australia to keep out a number of diseases and pests that exist in other states but not in WA.

Restrictions within the state minimise the spread of pests and diseases, such as cattle tick and associated blood parasites, and establish controls for specified diseases. These disease control activities are underpinned by legislation.

Legislation

Agriculture and Related Resources Protection Act 1976

Stock Diseases (Regulations) Act 1968

Beekeepers Act 1963

Farm biosecurity

On-farm biosecurity is the third and equally important level of biosecurity in preventing establishment of emergency animal diseases and pests, as well as plant diseases and weeds. The national and state borders form the primary and secondary levels of biosecurity.

This initiative provides information on general biosecurity issues such as setting biosecurity goals, training staff and family, signage and dealing with visitors. It also provides guidance on animal health issues such as sourcing disease free animals, use of AI, isolating introductions, monitoring of livestock health, fencing and feral animal control.

Specific information packages have been developed for contractors that may access rural properties, such as Telstra workers, and for particular industries such as farm tourism. Additional specific industry biosecurity plans are under development as part of the on-going StockGuard program.

Surveillance

General (sometimes called passive surveillance) surveillance involves continuous observation of a given population to detect the occurrence of disease. It covers all diseases, in all species (including wildlife and feral animals as well as livestock), in all locations. General surveillance is the “front line” in the surveillance system and is the most effective and efficient way to detect new diseases or incursions of exotic diseases.

The system relies heavily on a surveillance network consisting of:

- producers and others in close contact with livestock being alert for unusual or significant disease events and promptly reporting such events to a veterinarian;
- veterinarians (Government and private) being available and competent to soundly investigate reported cases; and
- diagnostic laboratories to analyse samples and conduct appropriate tests to reach a diagnosis.

Diseases of significance to Western Australia are listed in the “notifiable disease list”. The list is reviewed annually by the Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer and published in March. A person who suspects that a notifiable disease may be present in livestock is required to report this to a State Government Veterinary Officer or Stock Inspector within 24 hours. There are several reasons why a disease may be included on the notifiable disease list. The disease may be: exotic to Australia; present in Australia but exotic to Western Australia; subject to a control or eradication program; of special significance for export or other reasons; zoonotic (can affect humans).

Targeted (specific) surveillance involves examination of carefully selected animals to determine their status for a specified disease(s) over a defined time period. This frequently involves structured surveys of animals in their environment but may also include other activities such as examination of animals at abattoirs. Targeted surveillance activities in Western Australia include: NAMP; TSE; liver fluke; EBL; TFAP, Johne’s disease and footrot.

Legislation

Stock Diseases (Regulations) Act 1968

Livestock Identification

Western Australia has comprehensive mandatory livestock identification system for the significant livestock species, which requires identification by a specified age, or before the livestock leave the property. There is also a livestock waybill system that requires a waybill to accompany all movements of livestock. The waybill must be retained as a record for a specified period by sellers, transporters and receivers of moved stock.

These requirements provide an effective traceback system that facilitates rapid detection of at risk animals in the case of a disease outbreak.

Legislation

Stock (Identification and Movement) Act 1970

FERAL AND EXOTIC ANIMALS

In Western Australia the landholder (private and public) has responsibility for controlling specified feral animals. This is governed under the *Agriculture and Related Resources Protection Act 1976*. The Agriculture Protection Board is the Administrative Authority for this Act with the Department of Agriculture ensuring compliance to the Act.

The Department of Agriculture also:

- Regulates the entry, keeping and movement of exotic animals in line with national protocols (Vertebrate Pest Committee)
 - Guidelines for the Entry, Keeping and Movement of Exotic Animals in Western Australia.
- Undertakes targeted and adhoc inspection and monitoring to determine current population and control status
 - landholder reports and surveys (centralised database, feral pig survey);
 - aerial surveys (feral goats, feral donkeys as part of control program).
- Undertakes research into ecology and 'best practice' control techniques
 - partner in the Pest Animal Control Cooperative Research Centre.
- Provides advice and training on control techniques
 - advice through media, information notes, Declared Animal Handbook,
 - training on safe use of pesticides (1080, strychnine) and appropriate control techniques (poisoning, shooting).
- Undertakes audits and ensures compliance

- control agreements, pesticide supply and use.
- Provides a service to control feral animals
 - currently undertake aerial control of feral donkeys in the Kimberley using Judas collar technique
 - coordinate aerial baiting of wild dogs in pastoral and adjacent agricultural areas.

Legislation

Agriculture and Related Resources Protection Act 1976

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Prescribed premises that have the potential to pollute the environment require works approvals for construction of the premises and must be licenced or registered with the Department of Environmental Protection to operate. Animal industries that are prescribed premises include:

- Cattle feedlots with more than 500 animals,
- Intensive piggeries with more than 1000 animals,
- Abattoirs handling more than 1000 tonnes per annum,
- Rendering operations handling more than 100 tonnes per annum,
- Milk processors handling more than 100 tonnes per annum,
- Animal feed manufacturers producing more than 1000 tonnes per annum,
- Woolscouring premises handling more than 1000 tonnes per annum,
- Tannery premises handling more than 1000 skins per annum,
- Fellmongering premises handling more than 1000 skins per annum,
- Livestock saleyards or holding premises handling more than 10,000 animals per annum.

Such premises must comply with environmental policies and environmental Codes of Practice enacted or issued by the Department of Environmental Protection.

Regulations and guidelines also exist for issues such as the use of sewerage waste biosolids on to agricultural and other land.

Legislation, Policies and Codes of Practice

Environmental Protection Act 1986

Environmental Protection (South West Agricultural Zone Wetlands) Policy 1998

Environmental Protection (Swan Coastal Plain Wetlands) Policy 2000

Environmental Code of Practice – Cattle Feedlots

Environmental Code of Practice – Poultry Industry

Environmental Code of Practice – Dairies

Environmental Code of Practice – Abattoirs

Environmental Code of Practice – Rendering Works

Guidelines for Direct Land Application of Biosolids and Biosolids Products

PUBLIC HEALTH

Meat Safety

All operators processing any animals, meat or ready to eat products for human consumption, and the transporters of such products are required to meet Australian National Standards and have in place Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) based quality assurance systems which are audited by the Department of Health. This system is in place in all sections of the industry with the exception of the poultry industry where it is in the process of being introduced.

It is a requirement of the HACCP systems for operators to verify they are achieving the required outcomes by conducting microbiological monitoring of ready to eat smallgoods and carcasses, the results of which are monitored, and corrective action implemented if required.

Operators producing pet meat must register pet meat brands and ensure product is identified as per the regulations to distinguish it from meat for human consumption.

Legislation, Standards and Codes

Health Act 1911

Health (Meat Hygiene) Regulations 2001

Health (Pet Meat) Regulations 1990

Food Standards Code

Australian Standard for Construction of Premises Processing Animals for Human Consumption

Australian Standard for Construction of Premises Processing Meat for Human Consumption

Australian Standard for Hygienic Production of Meat for Human Consumption

Australian Standard for Transportation of Meat for Human Consumption

Australian Standard for Construction of Premise and Production of Poultry Meat for Human Consumption

Australian Standard for Production of Rabbit Meat for Human Consumption

Australian Standard for Production of Ratite (Emu/Ostrich) Meat for Human Consumption

Australian Standard for Production of Crocodile Meat for Human Consumption

Australian Standard for Hygienic Production of Game Meat for Human Consumption

Australian Standard for Hygienic Production of Natural Casings for Human Consumption

Australian Standard for Hygienic Rendering of Animal Products

Milk Safety

Dairy farms must comply with regulations with regard to location of the dairy, construction standards, effluent discharge, yard construction and equipment cleaning and milk cooling standards. Conditions for the production of milk are specified in the Health Act and Food Standards Code, and farms are assessed for compliance with the legislation.

Dairy processors have in place HAACP quality assurance systems which include microbiological monitoring of milk supplies and milk products. Test results are monitored by the Department of Health and corrective action implemented if required.

Dairy farms are encouraged to have in place a Hazard Analysis, Critical Control Point (HACCP) system of quality assurance. The Department of Agriculture Dairy Farm Assurance system is a whole farm HAACP system, designed for food safety and quality, and also animal welfare, environmental management and occupational safety and health.

The Dairy Farm Assurance system is independently audited under arrangements with the Dairy Industry Authority.

Legislation, Standards and Codes

Health Act 1911

Health (Food Hygiene) Regulations 1993

Export Control (Processed Foods) Orders

Dairy Industry Regulations 1997

Stock (Identification and Movement) Act 1970

Australian Food Standard Code Food Safety Requirements 3.2.2 and 3.2.3

Australian Standard 1187 – Farm Milk Cooling and Storage Systems

Australian Code of Practice for Dairy Factories

Australian Code of Practice for Cleaning and Sanitizing of Dairy Farm Equipment

Code of Practice for Farm Milk Collection – Dairy Manufacturers Association of Western Australia

Prepared by the Department of Agriculture, Western Australia